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WALDHEIM DENIES NAZI CHARGES

By JOY COOK

FORMER UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim yesterday flatly denied charges he had been a Nazi stormtrooper or served in a World War II military unit with a general who was hanged for war atrocities.

Waldheim, the frontrunner in the May 5 Austrian presidential election, insisted he was the victim of a "smear campaign" in the charges unveiled by the World Jewish Congress Monday.

"As I've said several times already, it's not true," the 67-year-old Waldheim insisted in an interview on state-run Austrian TV.

"I was never a member of one of these organizations," he said, referring to allegations he had belonged to the Nazi Student Union and to the infamous Brownshirt S.A. paramilitary squad during his student years in German-occupied Austria.

Quizzed about his reported service in Gen. Alexander Lohr's notorious military unit in the Balkans, Waldheim declared:

"This is also untrue. This is obviously a smear campaign."

The unit has been described as particularly brutal, even by Nazi standards and was responsible for the slaughter of thousands of Jews and Yugoslav partisans.

In a separate statement, Waldheim spokesman Gerold Christian acknowledged that Waldheim had served under Lohr, as a translator and an ordnance officer behind the lines.

Christian repeated Waldheim's earlier claims he spent part of his service time in Vienna studying law.

Christian charged that the anti-Waldheim campaign had been "paid for," but declined to elaborate.

He insisted Waldheim, who spent 10 years as the world's top diplomat, had been misquoted or improperly translated in an inter-

view with the New York Times published yesterday.

In that interview he was quoted as admitting — but downplaying — his membership in the Nazi groups and his work with Gen. Lohr.

But New York Times foreign editor Warren Hoge said Waldheim's comments were taped and there was no error in translation.

Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal, head of Vienna's Jewish documentation center, told the Associated Press he knew of nothing to incriminate Waldheim.

But, he said, evidence of a Nazi past presumably would have eliminated his election as secretary-general.

World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman accused Waldheim of "one of the most elaborate deceptions of our time."

In a letter to UN Secretary-General Perez Cuellar yesterday, Bronfman demanded the UN investigate its intelligence failures and whether other UN officials also might have concealed Nazi ties.

"The fact that Waldheim was able to carry off this extraordinary deception for four decades leads to two conclusions: Collusion or conspiracy of such enormous proportions ... or that perhaps he was subject to the most overt kind of blackmail," said WJC executive director Elan Steinberg.

Waldheim's tenure as the chief international civil servant was marked by stormy sentiment against the U.S. and Israel.

Dramatic UN developments in that time included the pistol-packing PLO chief Yasser Arafat's UN speech, a UN resolution condemning Zionism as racism and numerous censures of Israeli actions.

Waldheim had solid support from both the Soviet Union and the U.S. in an unsuccessful bid for a record third term in 1981.

Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum, head

of the American Jewish Committee, asked:

"How is it possible that all the nations of the world could find no leader, no other candidate (for the UN) than Waldheim?"

Meanwhile, The Post learned that Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), a former U.S. Ambassador to the UN, knew at least four years ago of charges the Austrian had lied about his Nazi past.

Moynihan wrote the foreword praising a 1982 book, "UN: Perfidy and Perversion," by Dr. Hillel Seldman, a Polish historian living in Brooklyn.

Moynihan's spokesman Lance Morgan said the senator had been aware of allegations raised in the book and other articles, but had no independent knowledge of Waldheim's Nazi activities.